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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1644
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1178
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0964
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 8918

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000995

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STATE FOR EUR/ACE, SCA/FO, SCA/CEN, DRL, S/P
NSC FOR MILLARD, MERKEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/30/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR BETTER ELECTIONS

REF: A) ARMBRUSTER-MCKANE 05-26-06 EMAIL B) MCKANE-ARMBRUSTER 05-27-06 EMAIL,
C) DUSHANBE 0620 D) DUSHANBE 0696

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, EXEC, Embassy
Dushanbe.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Although we can predict six months before Tajikistan's presidential election that it will not fully meet international standards, we have the opportunity to ensure that the election is conducted significantly better than any previous election in Tajikistan's short independent history. To put U.S. resources into this election is not to fund a "bad election." Rather, it is to have faith in the power of transformational diplomacy. Transformational diplomacy is a long-term process - it does not happen overnight, or in one election. We should not allow our natural desire for perfection to impede the possibility of real progress in the November election. Thus, we renew our request for \$300,000 in election funds, as previously foreseen in our jointly agreed presidential election strategy. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In Refs A, C, and D, Post requested \$300,000, as foreseen in the previously agreed USAID-EUR/ACE-Embassy Dushanbe presidential election strategy. Ref B responded EUR/ACE would review the request and stated, "We aren't interested in simply help[ing] the Tajiks make a bad election look better from the technical perspective. We should be interested in real changes to the way Tajiks do business, primarily in the pre-election period."

INTENSIVE WORK UNDER WAY TO IMPROVE THE ELECTION

13. (SBU) The Tajik Government has already committed to an historically large number of changes in how this election will be conducted, including in the pre-election period. This is thanks to intensive work with the government by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), fully supported from the beginning by the United Nations Tajikistan Office for Peace-building (UNTOP), and more recently by the OSCE.

14. (SBU) IFES, in conjunction with the Central Commission for Elections and Referenda and the President's Strategic Research Center, has used the OSCE Election Observers' report from the February 2005 parliamentary election to create a matrix of the shortcomings in that previous election, and has also drawn from Tajikistan's election laws and the CIS election-standards

document (Ref C). The Government of Tajikistan has bought into the entire matrix, and has undertaken to fix each identified problem, including making provision for civil society local election observers.

15. (C) Realistically, there is no time before the early November presidential election to revise the Law on Presidential Elections and to put it out for national discussion and international analysis. However, President Rahmonov has agreed to issue a presidential decree mandating the changes. This is already a significant step forward.

EQUAL MEDIA ACCESS

16. (C) Although we continue to press at every opportunity, extracting a promise to guarantee equal air time on state broadcast media for all parties and candidates is more problematic. While there may be improvements in this area that at least meet the current law, they will unlikely meet our standards. However, the Avesta Internet News Agency, one of the two most important independent Internet news sources in Tajikistan, has begun to publish an independent newspaper in Russian, "Commentaries and Facts." It was launched this Spring with a small grant from the British Embassy. To continue publishing until the end of this calendar year, including through the presidential election period, the Avesta founder and editor has asked Embassy Dushanbe for \$30,000, and has guaranteed his paper will provide equal access for all parties and candidates. We would like our requested \$300,000 for election activities to include this grant. The Central Commission for Elections and Referenda has also identified the need for televised debates as a step toward meeting international standards and has requested funding from donors. Up to \$30,000 of our request would also be used to sponsor debates or produce election-related talk shows.

THE PARTIES

DUSHANBE 00000995 002 OF 002

17. (C) In fact, equal media access, including on state broadcast media, for all parties and candidates, will not make much difference in the outcome of this election. The three miniscule "democratic" parties - the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the Socialist Party of Tajikistan - consistently poll in the single digits in reliable but unpublished public opinion polls and are based largely on personalities, not distinctive party platforms.

Further, they have already made clear that they have no intention of putting forward a joint candidate. The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan polls in the mid to high teens, and has already announced it will nominate a candidate. The Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) is barely distinguishable from the ruling Peoples Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT), although it gets its back up once in a while and criticizes the PDPT on one specific issue or another. If the CPT nominates a candidate, it would be only for symbolic purposes. The two new pocket parties - the Party of Economic Reform and the Agrarian Party - may well nominate candidates, but we would not be overly shocked if those candidates threw their support to President Rahmonov just before the election.

18. (C) The bottom line is that the PDPT will nominate President Rahmonov, and he will win the election. Further, although we will work intensively with Rahmonov and his closest advisers to ask him to prevent it, some of the district election commission results may be falsified. If so, that would be more by ex-Soviet force of habit than from need. President Rahmonov can legitimately win this election with a walloping 75% or more. He doesn't need Ministry of Security minions over-fulfilling the plan to give him 95%, and we will tell him so.

19. (U) UNTOP has also invited all political parties to take part in the election reform process and in moving forward the recommendations in the matrix. UNTOP's initiative has generally met with enthusiasm from the parties, and will help to further

institutionalize good governance and transparency.

THE LONG-TERM POWER OF TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY

¶10. (C) We can predict six months before the presidential election that it will not fully meet international standards. But we have the opportunity to ensure that the election is conducted significantly better than any previous election in Tajikistan's short independent history. We believe targeted U.S. funds could prove the power of transformational diplomacy. By setting new standards for the conduct of this election, we will have laid the foundation for future elections, when we can press for even more fundamental changes. Transformational diplomacy is a long-term process - it does not happen overnight, or in one election. We should not allow our natural desire for perfection to impede the possibility of real progress in the November presidential election in Tajikistan. Having the United States in a lead role in election reform will bolster our long-term goals, and our credibility with the people of Tajikistan.

¶11. (C) We renew our request for \$300,000 in additional funds to support the election process in Tajikistan.

HOAGLAND